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ABSTRACT

Understanding the structure of the English language can assist learners in getting the feeling for what comes next sequentially in oral or silent reading. Noting that the structure of knowledge movement during the 1960s-1970s emphasized the selection of what is relevant and important to teach and that pupils learn ideas inductively, this paper suggests some enjoyable ways to have pupils learn key ideas in English as it relates to reading instruction. The paper states, that to emphasize the structure of knowledge approach in learning, the teacher should: have an excellent knowledge of major generalizations in sentence patterns; sequence learning opportunities in which individuals experience the enactive (objects and items), the iconic (semi-concrete materials of instruction), and the symbolic (abstract ideas); appraise pupils to ascertain how many of these structural ideas are being attained by pupils in a spiral curriculum; and use enactive, iconic, and symbolic materials in inductive approaches to learning. The paper then focuses on a detailed discussion of sentence patterns, including procedures to use in evaluating pupil achievement pertaining to knowledge and skills in the structure or patterns of sentences. It concludes that teachers need to spend more time emphasizing to pupils how learning the structure of language is practical in reading and writing across the curriculum. (NKA)

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READING AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The structure of the English language is important for pupils to know about. Knowing structural ideas can assist learners in getting the feeling of what comes next sequentially in oral or silent reading. Having objectives to achieve pertaining to these structural ideas can be quite abstract and difficult. I have observed in classrooms at different grade levels how learning key ideas and these structural ideas can be interesting and useful in reading. During the 1960s and 1970s, the structure of each academic discipline became major objectives for pupil attainment However, educators must say that careful selection of what to tech is always important. The structure of knowledge emphasizes the selection of what is relevant and important to teach. It is ridiculous to think that the structure of knowledge movement was stressed only in the 1960s and 1970s. Determining key ideas and main ideas to teach is always important. Determining the structure of the English language, and any language for that matter, is very important. Much wasting of time occurs if teachers teach what is irrelevant and unimportant. The structure of knowledge movement also emphasized that pupils learn these ideas inductively. Inductive learning today is very important. Pupils like to discover rather than receive knowledge through lecture or heavy use of explanations. When pupils engage in problem solving, they are learning inductively. Thus, a problem is determined by pupils with teacher guidance in an ongoing lesson or unit of study. The problem is contextual and not outside the present learning activity being pursued. The problem indicates feelings of perplexity and uncertainty as to a course of action. The problem needs to be clear and unambiguous.

Pupils may then obtain information in answer to the problem. A variety of learning opportunities may be involve here when securing needed information or data. Sometimes, much time is needed in the solving of problems. At other times, instant decisions need to be made. Little time is then available to gather information. The information secured is used to develop an answer or hypothesis. The hypothesis is

evaluated in a real life situation. Inductive learning then is used in problem solving, be it in literature or any curriculum area. Problem solving is always important in school and in society due to individuals facing problems in many facets of life.

Learning structural ideas can be quite complicated and lack purpose such as application. However, I have come to believe, after observing many student and cooperating teachers in the public schools, that enjoyable ways can be found to have pupils achieve key, major ideas in English as it relates to reading instruction. Listening, speaking, and writing are also involved here.

To emphasize the structure of knowledge approach in teaching, the teacher should

1. have an excellent knowledge of major generalizations in sentence patterns since these key ideas become objectives for learner attainment.

2. sequence learning opportunities in that individuals experience the enactive (objects and items), the iconic (semi-concrete materials of instruction), and the symbolic (abstract ideas).

3. appraise pupils to ascertain how many of these structural ideas are being attained by pupils in a spiral curriculum. With a spiral curriculum, pupils meet up again and again at increasing levels of complexity the structural ideas which serve as objectives of instruction.

4. ask quality questions of pupils so that they may truly learn in an inductive manner. Inductive teaching then assists pupils to achieve the structural ideas.

5. use enactive, iconic, and symbolic materials in inductive approaches in learning (Ediger, 1997).

Sentence Patterns

There are five sentence patterns, in particular, that pupils should have knowledge about in order to become more proficient in reading. These five patterns will come up again and again in oral or silent reading. Enjoyable, yet scholarly methods may be used to guide pupil

achievement in attaining these five sentence patterns. The first pattern is the subject/predicate pattern. The reading teacher may take sentences from the basal reader or a library book read by children to illustrate sentence patterns. Sentence pattern number one-- Boys swim. There are just two words here to express a complete thought or idea. Pupils in class can be asked for another word which would replace "Boys." There are numerous correct responses here. One word is "girls." A brain-storming approach can be very interesting for pupils to see how many words would fit in. The sentence pattern stays the same and yet the subject changed from "Boys" to "Girls."

Pupils may wish to do journal writing on different sentence patterns discussed in class. It is good too if learners reflect upon what has been written. Reflecting stresses thinking about diverse sentence patterns and using these in writing sentences in journal writing. Application of what has been learned emphasizes review, practice, and use of sentence patterns in a multitude of ways. Pupils may wish to bring pictures to class which illustrate what is shown in an illustration. These illustrations are also good to indicate concepts stressed in sentence patterns, such as "Fish swim" for sentence pattern number one above.

A next sequential question could call for words that replace the predicate part "swim." Responses to be given by pupils might include the most obvious word "swam." Learners need to experiment with different words to take the place of "swims," such as using a singular subject with a singular predicate. Here, pupils could dramatize or use pantomime to illustrate a verb in a sentence. When verbs show action, it is relatively easy to dramatize/pantomime the contents.

A second sentence pattern for pupils to study and experience is the subject/predicate/direct object pattern, such as Bill hit the ball. Here again, pupils may suggest an endless number of words to substitute for the subject "Bill." Substitutions could also be made for the predicate "hit," as well as for the direct object "ball." Substitutions for each of these three words could be the following, as an example-- Carl, caught, and fish. Most pupils enjoy working with sentence patterns in this way.

They also notice how the English language works, even with changes being made.

In addition to bringing illustrations to class to show meaning of a sentence pattern, engaging in journal writing, and engaging in dramatic/pantomime activities, pupils may draw pictures of a subject, predicate, and direct object in sentence pattern number two or other patterns of sentences. Art correlates very well here with pupils studying sentence patterns.

A third sentence pattern involves the subject/linking verb, predicate adjective pattern, such as "Flowers are beautiful." This sentence pattern brought on diversity of responses from a class of fourth graders when they noticed the many words that may be substituted and yet the sentence pattern stays the same. One pupil brought a vase of flowers to school, a concrete experience, to show the third sentence pattern mentioned. After the class discussed the vase with flowers, pupils added another learning activity not previously mentioned above. The activity emphasized using concrete materials in the classroom to show sentence pattern number three-- Flowers are beautiful. What did pupils come up with? The following materials were used to show this sentence pattern:

1. The eraser was dusty. This sentence stressed what was observed at the chalkboard.

2. The food was delicious. This sentence came from eating in the school lunchroom.

3. The desk was dirty. A pupil observed his own desk in the classroom.

A fourth sentence pattern is represented by the subject/predicate/indirect object/direct object pattern such as, "Sally gave Sue a present. Sally gave "what?' The answer is "present." "Present" is the direct object whereas to whom was the present given? The answer is "Sue." "Sue" is the indirect object.

At this point, pupils may be ready to experiment with what makes

for a subject of a sentence. The subject will tend to be a noun or pronoun. A noun is a word that can be changed from singular to plural, such as girl/girls, and woman/women. Singular refers to one whereas plural indicates two or more of something. Th[illegible] is relatively easy for pupils to access. Pupils may also experiment with the subject doing the acting, such as "caught" the ball. The subject may also receive the action such as the package was wrapped by Alice. Thus, something was done to the subject of the sentence which was "package."

In their journals, pupils listed nouns and checked these with the teacher. Pupils in committees drew pictures of nouns representing those which are singular as compared to those which are plural. Active and passive voice of subjects was dramatized such as The boy was revived by two classmates. Here, a pupil lay motionless on the floor with two classmates applying artificial respiration! Pupils do like to dramatize and be creative in the language arts involving the study of sentence patterns.

A fifth sentence pattern is the subject/predicate/predicate nominative pattern, such as "Alice is a singer." Alice equals singer in this sentence. It names the same person. "Alice" is singular and needs a singular verb. such as "is." "Alice is also the name of a person and thus comes under the traditional definition of what a noun is, such as a person, place, or thing. The word "singer" is a noun too since it refers to a person. "Singer" is singular and when comparing that word with 'singers' where more than one person is in evidence.

Pupils can provide many responses as to substitutions that can be made for the words--Alice, is, singer; the sentence pattern of subject/predicate/ predicate nominative would stay the same, e.g. Bob was a swimmer (Ediger, 1988)..

In studying these five sentence patterns, pupils do not need to memorize content. In fact, when brain-storming, many correct responses are given by learners and they can experience much success inductively. Openended answers are given by pupils and these usually harmonize

with the many possibilities that are necessary in terms of responses given. Pupils need to be successful learners so that they are increasingly more motivated. Pupils tend to develop knowledge and feelings pertaining to the structure of the English language which assists then to read in a more confident manner. For example, the subject/predicate sentence pattern indicates there are certain words that would fit into this pattern. Pupils then receive cues and clues as to which words should follow in sequence (Ediger, 199).

Higher levels of cognition might well be an end result when pupils engage in thinking about different sentence patterns. Sternberg (1997) has developed an excellent model for teachers to use when teaching and pupils are assisted to think at a higher cognitive level;

Memory. Remember what a gerund is or what the name of Tom Sawyer's aunt was.

Analysis. Compare the functions of a gerund to that of a participle, or compare the personality of Tom Sawyer to that of Huckleberry Finn.

Creativity. Invent a sentence that effectively uses a gerund, or write a very short story with Tom Sawyer as a character.

Practicality. Find gerunds in newspapers or magazine articles and describe how they are used or say what general lesson about persuasion can be learned from Tom Sawyer's way of persuading his friends to whitewash Aunt Polly's fence.

Let's consider sentence pattern number one-- The subject/predicate pattern-- "Boys swim." Using the Sternberg model, the lowest level of thinking would be memory. Here, pupils could recall "the subject/predicate sentence pattern. They might also recall what a noun is and what verb is. For analysis, pupils may be asked to explain the difference between the noun and the verb. To stress creativity, the pupil may be asked to write a sentence containing a noun and a verb. For practicality, pupils might locate nouns and verbs in a very short story.

The Thornberg model provides guidance to teachers in having pupils move upward to higher levels of thought with four levels, namely

memory, analysis, creativity, and practicality in studying grammar as well as the structure of the English language.

Expanding Sentences

Pupils with teacher guidance enjoy making sentences longer or expanding them. For each of the five sentence patterns discussed above, the sentence can be expanded. If we take the first sentence pattern of subject/predicate-- Alice is a singer, the word "Alice" does lend itself to expansion with single words, but it does better with phrases and clauses. One could say "Brave Alice is a singer." The single word "brave" describes "Alice." If the noun "girl" is substituted for "Alice," Then an endless number of single words may be given to describe "girl." The following are provided as examples: small, tall, young, bashful, aggressive, and hostile, among others. There are many predicate nominatives that can take the place of "singer" such as older, younger, experienced, amateur, beautiful, and tall, among others.

Phrases are another way to expanding sentences. Generally, pupils learn rather easily that phrases contain more than one word and yet do not contain a subject and predicate. The following are phrases which modify "girl:"

1. with a red sweater, such as "The girl with a red sweater was a singer."
2. Feeling well, such as "Feeling well, the girl was a singer."
3. On the pond, such as "The girl on the pond was a singer,"

Later on, in sequence, and when readiness is in evidence, pupils may study and learn if a phrase is adjective and modifies a noun or is adverb and modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb.

A clause can do much to clarify meanings in a sentence and at the same time the concept of expansion is being emphasized:

The girl who has black hair is a singer.

The dependent clause is underlined and contains a subject "who" and a direct object "hair." A clause has a subject and a predicate, but does not express a complete thought.

Pupils may provide words which take the place of the subject "girl" and the predicate nominative "singer." They may also give words that replace the direct object of the dependent clause "hair." Pupils should notice that a dependent clause does not make sense by itself, e.g. "who has black hair." The verb or predicate of the dependent clause "has" may also be changed to "had" and yet the pattern of sentence is the same. The teacher should make lessons interesting and meaningful on sentence patterns and not go beyond what pupils can possibly understand. The goal inherent in sentence patterns is for pupils to feel and understand similarities in a sentence pattern. Pupils will become better readers as a result. Pupils will know that the English language has unique routines which are predictable, such as each of the five sentence patterns. They will understand how to expand sentences and why this is done. When pupils read, they will notice these same patterns of expansion, such as single word adjectives and adverbs; adjective and adverb phrases; and adjective, adverb, and noun clauses. At the beginning in sequence, pupils will learn about single words modifying the subject and predicate pattern; subject, predicate, direct object pattern; subject, linking verb, predicate nominative pattern; subject, linking verb, predicate adjective pattern; and subject, predicate, indirect object, direct object pattern.

What about pupils using technical terminology such as "predicate nominative?" I would say the teacher may use these and other complex terms, but not require pupils to memorize them. Meaning, however, is very important for pupils as to what a predicate nominative is when sequencing learning opportunities (Ediger,1996).

Evaluation of Pupil Achievement

There are numerous procedures to use in evaluating pupil achievement pertaining to knowledge and skills in the structure or patterns of sentences. Teacher observation can be an excellent approach, providing quality standards are used. With teacher observation, the philosophy of constructivism is in evidence. Thus, within context, pupils are applying what has been learned about sentence patterns. Within the framework of every day lessons, pupils are indicating progress in contextual situations.

Standardized and norm referenced tests may be used to ascertain pupil achievement. However, pupils are showing here how well they have achieved outside the context of learning. Tests, no doubt, will always be with us and we can use results from these tests to indicate where pupils specifically need help. Diagnosis and remediation would then be involved.

Howard Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences has much to offer in terms of how to evaluate pupil achievement. As the name indicates, pupils have numerous intelligences, not just one only. Pupils individually may possess one or more of these intelligences:

1. verbal/linguistic such as reading and writing well.
2. logical/mathematical such as in strengths of the left brain hemisphere with its logical thinking as well as the other component parts in mathematical proficiency.
3. visual/spatial such as pupils excelling in art work, geometry, and architecture.
4. musical intelligence such as in composing, singing, and playing musical instruments.
5. bodily/kinesthetic such as in athletics, dance, and pantomime.
6. interpersonal such as pupils doing well when working harmoniously in group settings.
7. intrapersonal whereby pupils achieve well on an individual basis.

8. scientific in which pupils use methods of objectivity in scientific knowledge obtained.

9. the human experience such as in coping well with the everyday problems that come about.

How then does the Theory of Multiple intelligences relate to pupil learning and evaluation in the structure of knowledge in reading and writing?

First, the heart of knowing about and using sentence patterns emphasizes verbal/linguistic intelligence. Here, pupils reveal their strengths through oral use of and written work in sentence patterns. :Using these patterns in oral and silent reading also stresses use of the structure of language. We must remember, pupils with other intelligences may not reveal what has been learned through verbal/linguistic intelligence, although this must always be stressed in ongoing lessons and units of study. With logical intelligence, the pupil needs to realize, for example, that substitutions made for the subject/predicate/ direct objective pattern of senience need to be logical. I have noticed pupils who make illogical substitutions such as Bill (subject) caught (predicate) the "if." The word "if" does not fit in logically.

Bodily/kinesthetic intelligence may be used frequently since pupils can dramatize content in a sentence pattern and attach meaning in so doing. Interpersonal or intrapersonal intelligence may be used in that the former stresses pupils working in committees whereas the latter emphasizes learners working individual on sentence patterns. I should add musical intelligence here since pupils individually who are talented in music may wish to put sentence patterns to an appropriate rhythm. A pupil even invented a dance to go along with syllabication related to a musical accompaniment. There are many possibilities here when stressing using multiple intelligences. Pupils individually may be able to reveal learnings better through multiple intelligences as compared to using verbal/linguistic approaches only/largely when studying structure in the English language.

Conclusion

Pupils having knowledge and skill pertaining to the structure of the English language should become better readers and writers. There are sentence patterns which hold true again and again. There are ways of expanding sentences which are also very consistent. Learners need to enjoy learning opportunities emphasizing structure in the English language. It certainly need not be boring or dull and dry. Rather there are learning opportunities which fascinate pupils and motivate toward greater achievement.

As pupils study the structure of the English language, they should be better able to predict what will come in sequence in reading as well as in writing. Vocabulary growth and development should also be in the offing since pupils experiment with sentences, words, phrases, and clauses. There should be much journal writing on the part of pupils when reading and writing are stressed as being interrelated. When pupils hypothesize as to which words might take the place of others in a sentence, individual differences are provided for and all may be successful learners because each pupil can present possible words in context.

The interests of pupils need to be focused upon structural ideas and their component parts. The teacher needs to be certain that pupils are attaching meaning to these structural ideas. They are not to be memorized for purposes of passing a test, but rather to use what has been learned in reading and writing. Thus the level of application is very important since structural ideas have much use. I believe that teachers need to spend time in having pupils perceive how learning the structure of language is practical in reading and writing across the curriculum.

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